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HOUSEKEEPER'S CHAT Thursday, June 4, 1930

(NOT FOR PUBLICATION)

Subject: "Mildew Stains." Information approved by the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Bulletin available: "Stain Removal from Fabrics."

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Among the tragedies that occurred in our neighborhood last summer, were two caused by that unwelcome plant which occasionally visits the best homes. All you have to do is to provide a damp, warm, dark spot with some fabric for it to settle on and a flourishing garden of that mold known as mildew will spring up overnight. No cultivation is needed at all. Just set the stage and you can grow a garden of fuzz and strange color on your best frock or your best table linen before you can say Jack Robinson.

I know, because of what happened in our neighborhood last year. Well do I remember that July morning when a young housekeeper up our street came in, carrying a roll of linen under her arm, and a woebegone expression on her face. She spread the roll on my kitchen table. It was her best lace luncheon set--a wedding present from her mother-in law. And every piece was spotted with dark patches varying from pin-hole size to fairly large splotches.

What had happened? Any housekeeper could tell at a glance. The luncheon set had been laundered and rolled up damp ready for ironing. Then company had arrived. The damp roll had been allowed to stand a few days. The weather was hot. And mildew needed no other invitation to come right in and make itself at home.

The second mildew tragedy occurred in the Lee household. Before going on her vacation, Marian Lee had packed away in a trunk in her cellar some clothing. There were two good silk dresses, a much-prized and very valuable old silk shawl, of her grandmother's, her husband's winter overcoat and several other articles of wearing apparel belonging to different members of the family.

Let me stop here long enough to say with emphasis that the attic is a far safer place to store clothes in summer than a damp cellar. Marian Lee, I'm sure, would approve of that statement. For while she was away a leaky pipe let some water into the cellar. The trunk, unfortunately, stood several weeks in the midst of a puddle. It was not a waterproof trunk.

I shall never forget Marian Lee's description of the contents of that trunk when she returned from her vacation and opened it.

"You should have seen the inside when I lifted the lid, Aunt Sonny. It looked as if a regular forest was growing on my clothes. My two dresses and the shawl were decorated with great greyish-green patches. And talk about fur-lined overcoats, my husband's coat went one better and was moss-lined! The fuzziest crop of moss ever raised in any home."

The first story about the luncheon set I really shouldn't have spoken of as a tragedy, because it had a happy ending. We managed to bleach out all the mildew stains.

But Marian Lee's clothes were ruined, all except one dress, which had been attacked very slightly. We sent that to one of the cleaning establishments in town and they treated it very successfully. The mildew had penetrated the fibers of the other clothes and weakened the fabric so that there was nothing to be done about them.

Now that June is here I'm starting to warn my friends about mildew in time to prevent any more disasters of this sort. Good ventilation and plenty of sunlight will help materially to prevent the growth of this destructive mold. And remember always to store clothes in a dry atmosphere.

Mildew attacks the surface of fabrics, paper, leather, and wood at first. If allowed to grow it will penetrate the fibers of these materials, leaving a stain that is practically impossible to remove. Textile fibers may be considerably weakened by mildew, and such articles as kid gloves and book bindings are ruined in appearance. Mildew will attack clothing hanging in closets or stored in trunks, if the surrounding atmosphere is damp. It may even appear overnight on shoes, leather bags, chairs, books, upholstery, and the walls of houses.

Slight fresh mildew stains will usually wash out in the laundry. And on such fabrics as white cotton and linen, that will stand bleaching agents, the mildew spots can be removed if they are treated early. Among the bleaching agents suggested are sour milk, lemon juice, Javelle water, potassium permanganate, and oxalic acid. Long sunning will also help and is part of the lemon-juice treatment. The methods of applying these various substances are described in our bulletin on stain removal. I've mentioned this useful bulletin so often that I'm sure you have all at least heard of it. From the way our supplies melt off the shelves and into the mail every day, I'm sure a lot of you already own a copy.

Unfortunately most of the bleaches for mildew, cannot be used on silk or wool.

Mildew on leather may be wiped off with a moist cloth, after which the article should be washed, if washing will not damage it. Use a moist sponge and saddle soap and dry well. Shoes or leather bags having an enamel or varnish finish are less susceptible to mildew.

Mildew sometimes even attacks wall paper. If this has happened, don't try to paper the mildew, since it is likely to spread through to the fresh paper. The starchy paste used in papering also aids this growth to

flourish. Slight mold spots on the wall can sometimes be removed by applying a solution of one part salicylic acid in four parts of alcohol. Put it on with a soft sponge. If this fails to remove the spots satisfactorily, the old paper should be removed and the walls repapered in dry weather.

I think that's all the suggestions I have about mildew. Oh, wait a minute. I almost forgot a question about mildew stains on the shower bath curtain. After a bath, leave the wet curtain spread out on the bar until it dries. If you pull it back while it is wet and fasten it together, a mildew garden is very likely to start. And once started, every extra wetting the curtain gets, will aid the growth of the mildew.

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Tomorrow: "Little Ways to Care for Clothes."